

The Last Journey

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Summary: The Doctor knew that his men were talking behind his back, he knew they thought he had gone mad but he made a vow and even if it meant sailing the seven seas and beyond, he would not rest until Clara was back by his side. PirateAU. Set a few years after Under Jolly Roger (Read that one first if you haven't yet).

1. Chapter 1: Silly Little Bit Of Hope

****The Last Journey****

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****Chapter 1: Silly Little Bit Of Hope****

The Doctor felt like he was falling, drifting into a sweet, numbing oblivion. That was the only place where he could find peace and consolation even though the ship was crossing rough water and the movements made his stomach twist to the point he thought he would vomit. He turned around in his bunk and looked into Clara's serene face.

"My Clara," he whispered softly and outstretched his hand to touch her hair. It always felt like silk, even now, but instead of a smile he only earned a scolding glance from her.

"Why?" she breathed and mimicked his gesture, stroking his face and his hair with a gentleness that was unique to her until her fingers tangled in the beard that had grown untended for too long, "Why do you keep doing this to yourself?"

The Doctor snorted in reply and laughed bitterly. "It's the only way

to be with you."

"_Captain!_"_

Finally Clara smiled at him. "They need you," she whispered softly. "Your men. Your ship. They need you. You still haven't repainted the _TARDIS_ and I've told you a hundred times."

The Doctor caught hold of her hand and drew it to his lips, placing a long kiss to the back of it. "And I need _you_."

"_Captain!_"_

Clara exhaled sharply and closed her eyes. No. That was all wrong. He needed to look into her eyes. He needed to remain here a bit longer. He just wanted to be with her. Was that really too much to ask?

"You stubborn, drunk, old fool," she said after a while and the Doctor was vaguely aware of indistinct chatter breaking out around him. It didn't matter. Being with Clara, that was what mattered and nothing else. "They're talking behind your back. They say you've gone mad."

"I know that," the Doctor cut her off. He just wanted to talk to Clara, not to the rest of his sanity that he hadn't been able to drown.

"You're going to lose everything. And for what?" Clara granted him a sad smile and suddenly pulled her hand out of his grip, "A silly little bit of hope."

"Hope is never silly," he countered determinedly.

"It is when it's lost."

The Doctor gasped when suddenly he was so rudely awoken and found himself lying in a puddle of saltwater that was slowly drenching his mattress. He blinked and found one-eyed Johnny standing over his bunk, holding the empty bucket.

"I'm sorry, Captain," he smiled weakly, "I didn't know how else to wake you. We've reached Tolagnaro."

The Doctor sank back into the pillow with a groan and closed his eyes. "I'll be outside in a minute."

"Captain-" Johnny tried to object, sounding as if he didn't believe him at all "€" which was just too understandable. But still, the Doctor needed a moment.

"Go," he told the man standing over his bed and was finally left alone again without further discussion. Yet no matter how hard the Doctor tried he couldn't invoke Clara from his mind again.

Slowly the Doctor staggered in the direction of the deck, his stomach revolting against the rum and the waves. When he realized he couldn't hold it in any longer he lurched forward and threw up over the railing. Years ago he would have considered it an embarrassment. He was a seasoned sailor, he could hold his drink but that was before Clara and before it had all gone wrong.

"Better?" Johnny asked him with a sympathetic look.

The Doctor straightened his back and swallowed. "No," he replied simply.

"Well," the young man took a deep breath, "We're in Tolagnaro. Finally. Wanna enlighten the crew what we're doing here?"

"No."

"Doctor," Johnny began and he just knew that it was going to turn into a lecture he had no intention of hearing, "They're getting restless. I know, sailing around the seas is what we do but you seem to have a plan and you don't want to share it. Just give them something. Anything. They just need to know you're not doing anything stupid, that you're still their captain."

"Well, this is my ship, so that makes me your captain. When did you start questioning my orders?"

"I don't like the new steersman you picked up," Johnny said after a moment, changing the topic.

"He brought us through several storms. He does his job," the Doctor argued drily.

"He does your job, Doctor," he reminded him, "What would Clara say if she could see you like this?"

Her name felt like a sword piercing his heart. Clara would have never brought the steersman on board, Clara would have taken the wheel herself and headed straight into adventure, Clara would slap him until common sense finally returned to him. Everything was different with Clara, everything was better.

"Doctor-"

"I'm meeting someone here," the Doctor said, taking a deep breath, "Ready the jolly boat, will you?"

A half hour later the Doctor was being rowed ashore by Pit even though he had wanted to make this journey alone. His crew didn't need to know where he was going, what he was planning. He barely even believed it himself and a part of him was afraid they would abandon him if they knew. Yet Johnny had insisted that Pit joined him and when he had to grasp the edge of his seat a little tighter because the waves were turning over his stomach once again the Doctor had to admit that Johnny had been right. He wasn't in the state to go anywhere on his own right now and even when he had stepped on land he still could've sworn that the ground beneath his feet was swaying.

"Are you okay?" Pit asked him, the same wary look on his face that he had become familiar with of late whenever he did look at his crew.

"For the last time," the Doctor growled, "I am not okay. I will not be okay. And I don't want to hear that question ever again."

The Doctor suddenly resumed walking, or rather, staggering off in the direction he thought was right. "You can wait here," the Doctor told Pit.

A few minutes later he found the house and it looked exactly like they had all described it in the stories. Right now the Doctor only prayed that they had been right about everything else because he was already grasping at straws and the witch was his last hope of ever seeing Clara again. Her and the drunken stupor only rum could deliver.

The Doctor knocked and shortly after was asked to enter the house. The first thing he noticed was the darkness that seemed much more gentle on his headache than the bright sunlight. The second thing was an old woman dressed in rags who was sneering at him through rotting teeth. There it was, his last silly little bit of hope.

"I've come to ask your help," the Doctor began, "I've heard stories about you, that you might have what I need."

The woman giggled, a girlish laugh for such an old lady. "I've heard of you, too, Doctor," she said and stepped closer, eyeing him from head to toe, "The notorious pirate that doesn't actually do a lot of pirating, sailing the seas on his TARDIS because he refuses to take orders from anyone. Tell me, why should I help you?"

The Doctor gave her a sincere smile right before he produced his pistol from out of his holster, pointing it directly at her.

"Because I'm telling you to," he said simply.

2. Chapter 2: The Key

Thank you all so very, very, very much for the reviews! They make my day. They really do! Now, shall we see what happened to Clara?

Chapter 2: The Key

"Sit," the old woman told him sternly and the Doctor could do nothing but stare at her in confusion. He was pointing a weapon at her and he was giving him orders. Something about that just didn't seem right to him. Nevertheless he eventually obeyed under her strict glances and took a seat at the table but kept his pistol pointed at her to make sure he wasn't tricked.

"You're not a killer," the witch said as she sat down on the opposite site of the table, "You've killed but you're not a killer."

"That depends on you," he growled in reply, "Help me and I won't harm you."

"I'll help you but I'd prefer not to be threatened while I do," the smile on her face was ice cold and finally the Doctor lowered his weapon and placed it on the table. It could be a trick, the Doctor couldn't tell. He was still too dazed for reasonable judgement.

"Give me your hand," she ordered him and reluctantly the Doctor outstretched his arm. The witch grabbed him by the wrist and turned it over, studying his palm for a long time while the Doctor observed her, his eyebrows raised. He didn't come here for soothsaying. He came for the key.

"My, you really did love her, didn't you?" she asked after a while and suddenly her features seemed to have softened a little when she looked at him, "It won't be easy, if it is possible at all. No one who went there has ever come back, at least not to my knowledge."

"I don't care," the Doctor spat.

"Tell me one thing, Doctor. Do you want her back because you blame yourself or because you can't live without her?"

He hesitated for a long moment even though it was clear to him that it was both. And he knew that he had to do everything in his power to get her back, even if it meant putting his own life at risk. He had to get Clara back.

"There is a key," she said after a while, "I have it here."

The Doctor cocked an eyebrow. He had thought she would probably know where it was but not that it was already in her possession. It made things a lot easier than he had anticipated. "How did you come by such a thing?"

The witch shrugged. "A sailor sold it to me. Or rather, he begged me to take it. Said he could hear the whispers from those poor souls coming through whenever he laid his hands upon it. Drove him half mad, the screams, the pleading."

The Doctor took a deep breath, trying very hard not to imagine Clara screaming for help when he had no way of letting her know he was on his way.

"If no one has ever come back, how can this key be here?"

The old woman smiled at him but said nothing. The Doctor simply guessed that it was one of those things even she couldn't explain.

"Give it to me. I don't care about the price, I'll give you everything I have. I'll give you my ship if I must," he told her in an urgent tone.

Suddenly the witch burst into laughter. "I'll give you the key, the price isn't the problem. You are."

He furrowed his brows at her, not quite understanding.

"You must take the key to where the equator and the Prime Meridian meet but in the state you're in you will never even reach that destination, let alone survive what comes after. You have poisoned yourself for months, you're nothing but a shadow of a man."

The Doctor simply glared at her. The witch suddenly rose from her seat and instinctively he reached for his pistol but she only walked

across the room to retrieve a vial from a shelf filled with all sorts of different mixtures.

"This tonic will draw the poison out of your system in less than a day. It would be like you have never even tasted rum but," she paused, looking at him almost threateningly, "It's going to be painful. If you want to see Clara again, this is your only choice. You have to do it."

The Doctor took the vial from her and it weighed heavy in his hand. _If you want to see Clara again_. . . _you have to do it_. . . as if it was that easy. He could see her, he just needed to drink himself into oblivion and the visions came. How was he going to give up the last thing that connected him to her? That was how he had lived day in and day out for the past months and he wasn't sure anymore who he was without it, without Clara. In losing her he had also lost himself.

"You have to do it," the witch reminded him, "You won't survive this for another fortnight and you certainly won't survive what comes after you have used the key."

The Doctor took a deep breath and nodded before he unscrewed the cap and emptied the tonic in one go. It tasted disgustingly sweet.

The old woman smiled at him. "I'm going to have to restrain you," she said calmly, "For your own protection."

His knees already felt weak when he rose out of the chair and was being led into another room with a not so very comfortable looking straw bed. As soon as he had settled down the woman fastened his hand and feet with the iron cuffs attached to the wood and he could only imagine that she had used this tonic on quite a few unlucky people before him to know she had to resort to this.

"What do I do now?" he asked.

"Sleep, if you can. And try not to scream."

It didn't take long for the effect to kick in and the nausea he had felt earlier was nothing compared to the cramps he was beginning to experience. He closed his eyes and tried to think about Clara. If everything went according to plan they would be reunited.

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The Doctor reached for Clara's and and couldn't help but smile back at her. Her laugh was so contagious and it filled his heart with nothing but pure joy while they jumped off the railing together and into the crystal clear sea the TARDIS currently anchored in. The weather was too warm and the water pleasantly cool on their skin. As soon as they had come back to the surface the Doctor pulled Clara against his own body and kissed her until they ran out of breath. This trip to the Caribbean had been the best idea she had ever had.

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Clara dragged him across the square until they came to a halt in the

middle of it. He didn't really like being on land for so long and leaving the TARDIS with Johnny and the rest of the crew but after Clara had begged him for months he had finally given in and taken her to Rome.

"Impressive, isn't it?" she asked him, looking up at the Papal Basilica of St Peter and the Doctor couldn't deny it. But what he found infinitely more impressive was the look on Clara's face and he bent down to place a kiss on her temple. She only needed to ask and he would show her everything this world had to offer.

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The Doctor buried himself deeper inside of her, making Clara moan underneath him as she clawed at his back. They had done this hundreds of times in all possible positions and in the most impossible of places and yet whenever he entered her it felt like a miracle each time. He didn't think he would ever grow tired of making love to her.

She began to whimper underneath him when his thrusts came faster. "God, I love you," Clara moaned.

Suddenly the Doctor came to halt while he was still inside of her and she opened her eyes to look at him and see what was wrong.

"We should get married," he whispered, taking not only Clara by surprise but also himself.

After a moment of consideration Clara eventually nodded. "Okay," she replied breathlessly.

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The Indian ceremony was foreign and strange and all he really remembered was how beautiful Clara looked in the traditional clothes they had given her. They had no rings and they had only improvised their vows but the town was somehow all too happy for them and to celebrate their union with them. The Doctor, Clara and the rest of the crew were invited to join them at a big festival that was a bit foggy in his mind now because all they had done was kiss and drink and make love all night in their clumsy, drunken state before he had promised her the best honeymoon she could ever ask for.

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The Doctor cried out in pain and fought against his restraints when the pain grew too much to bear that not even his dearest memories could help him take his mind off it.

"Easy," the witch whispered next to him and a moment later he could feel her place a cool, damp cloth on his forehead. He hadn't even realized how he was burning up. "If you survive this you will be healthier and better than ever before."

"_What?_" his head shot around and by the look on her face he could tell that she wasn't joking. He could die. He could actually die and then where would Clara be? A surge a pain shot through his stomach and the Doctor once again tried in vain to loosen his chains.

"Don't fight it. Let it happen. Think about Clara."

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The storm was the worst he had ever seen and the Doctor had already lost three members of his crew. They had been swept away by the waves and there was nothing he could have done about it.

"Go inside," the Doctor bellowed in Clara's direction.

"Not gonna happen," she said determinedly, "I won't leave you."

"But--"

He was interrupted when Clara suddenly stepped up to him and pressed a kiss to his lips. "Nothing is going to make me leave you. Ever. And certainly not a silly storm like this. We're in this together."

The Doctor couldn't help but smile and suddenly he lost his balance as a massive wave hit the ship, almost capsizing them all and then he heard her scream. When he looked back up Clara was nowhere to be seen.

"_Doctor!_"

He dashed towards the railing where Clara was dangling, still holding on tight to the swaying ship, her feet hanging over the rough sea. He caught hold of her wrists just as she was about to slip.

"I've got you!"

But as he tried to pull her back on board another wave hit them, tearing Clara away from him and out onto the ocean.

What happened next went by too fast for him to really understand. The Doctor reached for the nearest rope and tightened it around his waist and he jumped after her before anyone even had the slightest chance of stopping him. Under water he saw nothing at all except darkness. The water was too cold to move and he had to hurry. He needed to find Clara and bring her back on board. But when he tried to swim further he found resistance and soon he realized that he was being pulled back on board. He tried opening the knot, tried freeing himself from the rope. He didn't have a lot of time to save her but his fingers felt too numb and soon he broke back through the surface. His struggling didn't help and once he was back on board and tried to go back into the water Johnny knocked him out cold and everything went black.

End
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